

5

PLAIN REASONS
FOR
BELIEVING THAT GOD WILLETH
THE SALVATION
OF
ALL MANKIND.



BLACKBURN:
Printed by HEMINGWAY and NUTTALL.
1798.
[PRICE THREE - PENCE.]

MAIN REASON

THEIR THAT GOOD WILL

THE REASON

ALL MANKIND



THEY BY HENRY AND

178

THEY BY HENRY AND

Plain Reasons, &c.

THE sacred scriptures contain a full and clear revelation of the will of God to men. In these writings he makes his glory to pass before us, and proclaims his great name. God is to be known in his word. On this account, the holy scriptures ought to be esteemed by us, *more than thousands of gold and silver.* In these precious mines, we ought to dig for the knowledge of God, as for hid treasure. We have every thing to encourage us in the important enquiry. The subject is glorious: To have just views of the existence, character, and conduct of Jehovah. And especially, to see his perfections manifested, in the salvation, and happiness of his rational creatures. The book which reveals these glories, is plain and simple; addressed to the common sense of mankind, and calculated to convey sound wisdom, to the weakest, and most ignorant; if they are sincere, and willing to know the will of God. If we stand in the ways of divine knowledge, and see,

and ask wisdom from above, our heavenly father will teach us by his spirit, and cause his word to be a *light to our feet, and a lamp to all our paths*. We have indeed our difficulties, and these difficulties are very great. The knowledge of God is a very profound subject;—a deep where all our thoughts are drowned. He cannot be found out to perfection. Our hearts, through sin, are alien from God, and *deceitful above all things*. But shall we therefore despair? Should we not rather double our diligence? Because we know but little of God, shall we therefore desire to know no more? Surely not. To know God is life eternal. Our happiness must be proportionate to our knowledge of him.

In this enquiry, nothing is more important, than to settle in our minds the sufficiency, and simplicity of the holy scriptures. These are faithful guides. If we honestly labour, by meditation and prayer, to understand them, and determine in all things to be led by them, we shall go on our way safely. While the proud philosopher is lost in the wilderness of his own imaginations, the sincere disciple of revealed truth, walks in the ways of pleasantness and peace.

The

The intention of these lines, is to examine the *extent*, of the kindness, and love of God to men. The bible is not silent on this subject. It represents the great fountain of goodness, branching itself out into a thousand streams, and reaching to the uttermost parts of the earth. May the father of lights illuminate our minds, and direct our hearts into his love !

Our present enquiry is, whether the holy scriptures teach us, that *God willeth the salvation of all mankind ? And whether he hath made ample provision for it ?*

In order to know this, let the following things be carefully examined :

I. The express declarations of scripture, on the *extent* of mercy. The divine conduct, to Cain and Abel, is worthy of particular attention. Abel sought the favour of God by sacrifice, *and obtained witness that he was righteous* : But the offering of Cain was rejected. He thought the partiality of God unjust. *He was very wroth, and his countenance fell.* He did not consider that he was rejected because he followed his own way. If he had approached God, in the same manner his brother Abel did, he would have received the same blessing. Is not this fully implied, in the answer of God to him ? *Why art thou wroth, and why*

is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt not thou be accepted? These words contain a clear overture of salvation. The goodness of God was extended even to Cain. He afterwards indeed became a fugitive, and vagabond in the earth; but it was because he rejected the counsel of God, against himself. The ministry of Noah may be considered as a declaration of mercy to the antediluvians. Their wickedness was indeed great upon the earth, and God said, his spirit should not *always* strive with them. His spirit did strive with them, for a season. *1 Peter*, iii. 19, 20. The apostle, in this passage, represents the inhabitants of the old world as spirits in prison, which were some time disobedient: That Jesus Christ went to them, by his spirit, in the person of Noah, and preached to them, *while the ark was a preparing*: And that during that period, the long-suffering of God *waited*. In this short, plain account, we may clearly see the goodness of God, extending itself to men before the flood.

The words of Moses to the children of Israel, shew in strong terms, the universal offer of mercy to them, notwithstanding all their provocations against God, *Deut. xxx. 19. I call heaven and earth to record this*

this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing : Therefore choose life. The universality of mercy is fully declared in Psalm cxlv. 9. *The Lord is good to all ; and his tender mercies are over all his works.* The scripture asserts the universal love of God, in sending his Son. The Son of God is said to be *the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,* John i. 9. And God sent his Son into the world THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED, John iii. 17. On the extent of mercy, the words of St. Paul are remarkable : He exhorts, that prayer and supplication be made for all men, and gives two reasons why it should be so : First, *It is acceptable in the sight of God :* Secondly, *because God will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.* If the scripture must determine the extent of divine mercy, the above simple testimonies are sufficient. They declare the universal love of God to men, and his willingness to save them. These testimonies must include more than God giving men existence, and temporal favours to support them in this world for sixty or seventy years. If no provision is made for the eternal salvation of some men, mere existence, and the things necessary for the support of it, can not

not be expressions of the love of God to them, but rather of his hatred. In this case every moment of existence is a great curse, and men are placed in a state of necessary destruction, and must perish, because no remedy was ever provided. But this surely is unworthy of that God, who is truly *good to all*, and who is *not willing that any should perish*. Some may satisfy themselves with rejecting this truth, because they cannot reconcile it with the conduct of God, in doing more for some than others; and because some of the human race are eventually lost. It is acknowledged there are things in this, and all other facts, which human understanding cannot comprehend. But shall we therefore reject them? This surely would not be wise. The meaning of simple testimonies we may understand, when we cannot explain, and harmonize all the truths contained in them. In walking by this rule we go on sure ground, in forming our judgment of revealed truth. The words of scripture are plain in declaring the extent of the love of God. *His tender mercies are over all his works. He is willing that all should come to repentance.* On this sure ground, we ought to believe, that God willeth the salvation of all mankind.

II. If

II. If it be a scriptural doctrine, that all men may be saved, we may expect to find some account of provision being made for it, in the death of Christ. Here we have an extensive field of enquiry. On this subject, let us state some undeniable facts. The bible is the only authentic revelation of our redemption. This revelation is plain and popular; addressed to the bulk of mankind, to give them sufficient instruction on their redemption by Christ. The natural, simple, obvious testimony of scripture, must guide all our enquiries, respecting the whole subject. We cannot well suppose, that the bible will be silent on the extent of the Redeemer's death. The wise author of this book knew, that sincere enquirers after sacred truth, would earnestly ask, For whom did Jesus Christ die? And surely God was too good to withhold the necessary information. These facts cannot reasonably be doubted. Let us then candidly enquire, whether there is a single passage in this plain book, which by any just rule of interpretation, fairly conveys the idea, that Jesus Christ died for a part of mankind *only*. If it be true, that he died only for a part of the world, we may expect to find it plainly asserted in those
 holy

holy scriptures, *which are able to make us wise unto salvation.*

In St. Matthew **xx.** 28. we are told, that *the son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.* But can we justly infer from this, that he gave his life a ransom for a *few*, or for a *part only*? Surely not. For if he died for all, it is still true that he gave his life a ransom for many: And this text asserts no more. The words of Christ, in John **x.** 11. have been thought by some to express a limitation of his death. The words are, *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.* But let the whole connection be carefully examined, and it will appear, that our Lord is not speaking of the extent of his death at all, either as limited, or universal; but simply of the *goodness of his character*, as the shepherd of his flock. He is contrasted with the hireling, who seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: But he is the good shepherd. That he died for his sheep is a glorious truth: But that he died for them *only*, cannot be justly inferred from these words.

Some have imagined that the death of Christ is confined to the church of God, in Acts **xx.** 28. *Feed the church of God,*
which

which he hath purchased with his own blood. But if this text proves the limitation of Christ's death, it proves too much. It proves, that Christ died only for the congregation of believers at Ephesus: for that was the church intended in these words. The pastors of the church at Ephesus are here exhorted to the faithful discharge of the whole pastoral office, over the flock of God. And the exhortation is enforced by Jesus redeeming the church by his own blood. This seems the whole truth of the passage; and does not therefore prove that Christ died for a part of mankind only.

In *Ephesians* v. 25, 26. it is asserted, that *Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify, and cleanse it.* But here also no limitation is mentioned. Indeed, the *extent* of Christ's death is not the subject of this passage, but the *end* and *design* of it, with regard to his church, namely, that he might *sanctify, and cleanse it.* The saints of God being redeemed from the earth, mentioned *Rev.* v. 9. xiv. 4. does not prove that no provision was made for the redemption of the rest of mankind. Whether the passages relate to the people of God in their triumphant, or militant state; they simply affirm a truth, which
all

all the redeemed of the Lord will thankfully subscribe—that their redemption is through the blood of the lamb: But they neither express, nor imply, a limitation of the death of Christ.

If the above scriptures do not limit the death of Christ, we may justly despair of finding any proof of it in the bible. For all other scriptures, in which Christ dying for a part of mankind is mentioned, are as far from conveying the idea, that he died for a part *only*, as the scriptures we have examined.

But on the other hand, let us examine whether there are plain declarations in the bible, which by all good rules of interpretation, must mean, that the Son of God died for the sins of the whole human race. Let it be carefully observed, that where the scriptures make particular mention of the persons for whom Christ died, the most universal expressions are used. *He died for all. By the grace of God he tasted death for every man. He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, &c.* In order to weaken and destroy the force of this argument, it has been observed, that general terms are sometimes used in the scriptures, when considerable limitations must be allowed. It is acknowledged

ledged that this is sometimes the case. But in these cases, limitation of general phrases is so self-evident, natural, and plain, that their meaning cannot well be misunderstood. In the subject before us, however, this rule will not apply. To restrict the sense of the most universal terms, when the extent of the Saviour's death is the subject intended, is unnatural and unwarrantable liberty with the sacred writings. In a plain book like the bible, teaching plain men the extent of the Redeemer's death, that they may know for whom he died, we have a right to expect clearness and precision. That God should use the most general terms which language is capable of, when speaking of the persons for whom his son died, and to mean by them that Christ only died for a part of the human race, is not supposable. On a subject of this moment God would not deceive us. When he informs us, that his Son *tasted death for every man—for all—for the whole world*, we must suppose, that he intends us to believe, that his blessed Son died for the sins of all mankind. That well-known passage, 1 John ii. 2. places this subject in a very strong light, and seems intended to remove every doubt respecting the universal extent of

B

the

the Saviour's death : *He is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* The proper exposition of these words seems to be : He is the propitiation for our sins, who now believe, whether Jews or Gentiles ; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of all mankind besides. If it be doubted whether the whole world in this text intends the whole human race, let it be candidly examined in what sense the words are used by the same writer elsewhere. The *whole world* occurs only once more in this epistle : And its very obvious meaning will confirm our exposition of the passage under consideration, *chap. v. 19. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* If the *whole world*, in this passage, means all mankind besides, what reason can be given, why it has not the same meaning in the other ? *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son, to be the propitiation for our sins.* Do we believe on the Son of God ? Do we feel his blood applied ? Does it *purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God ?* Does his
dying

dying love *constrain us to live not to ourselves, but to him who died for us?* Do we know that *he is the propitiation for our sins?*

Let us then rejoice that he is also the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.—

“ Oh! for a trumpet’s voice,
 “ On all the world to call,
 “ To bid their hearts rejoice
 “ In him, who died for *all*.
 “ For all my Lord was crucified;
 “ For all, for all my Saviour died.”

III. Exhortations to turn to God, and invitations to come to him, for the blessings of redemption, are indefinite, and universal, *Psa. iv. 2, &c. O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? Stand in awe, and sin not. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.* In these words the children of men in general are exhorted to comply with the terms of acceptance with God. *Isa. i. 16, 17, 18.* In this passage we may observe, that persons of the most abandoned character, who are living without God in the world, are thus exhorted: *Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings, and learn to do well: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red*

like crimson, they shall be as wool. Here is plainly a general exhortation, with a gracious promise annexed. *Chapt. lv. 6, 7.* is of the same nature: *Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found . . . Let the wicked forsake his way . . . let him return to the Lord, and he will abundantly pardon.* The same truth is clearly taught in *Jer. vi. 16. Ezek. xviii. 27.* and *Joel ii. 12, 13.* and in many other parts of the old testament. And in the new testament it appears with still greater glory, in the ministry of Jesus Christ, and his apostles. Two remarkable examples for the present shall suffice. The first is, our Lord's parable of the great supper, *Matt. xxii. 3, &c. Luke xiv. 16, &c.* The richness and variety of gospel blessings are here represented by a great feast, amply furnished. The master of this feast is Jesus Christ. The servants are his ministers. Their commission is to say to them that are bidden, *Come, for all things are now ready.* In their first attempt, they were not successful. The master of the feast was angry, and declared that none of those men which were bidden, and made so light of the invitation, should partake of the feast. The servants were then commanded to go into the most public places, the streets and lanes of the city,

the

the highways and hedges, and to give a general invitation to the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Yea, by all the force of persuasion, to compel them to come in. Here observe, 1. Real provision made. 2. A free and earnest invitation given. 3. This provision and invitation rejected: *They made light of it.* 4. On this account, the persons invited excluded from the feast.

How exactly this parable corresponds with *Mark xvi. 15, 16. Preach the gospel to every creature, and he that believeth not shall be damned.* The second example is St. Paul's sermon, recorded in the 13th chapter of the *Acts*. In this sermon, the unlimited call of the gospel is clearly illustrated. St. Paul addressed a mixed company. He preached the gospel to them in general terms. He said, *We declare unto you glad tidings. Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.* And to shew the same persons the danger of neglecting the great salvation, he warned them in the following strong language: *Beware, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.* Here is proof of the gracious offers of the gospel, and the
most

most awful threatenings, being addressed to the same persons, by the authority of God. From the whole, we may most certainly conclude, that the preachers of the gospel are called to persuade *all* men, and beseech them by all the sure mercies of the everlasting gospel, *to be reconciled to God*. The universal call of the gospel clearly demonstrates, that God willeth the salvation of all mankind. For if the invitations of the gospel are general, and the provision of it limited to a part of the world, what ideas can we possibly form of the sincerity and goodness of the ever-blessed God. We must suppose that God invites and intreats men to accept of mercy, when no mercy was ever provided for them. Surely this is not the manner of God, whose ways are all equal. No, God will not deceive, or tantalize any of his creatures. If God calls all men every where to repent, all men every where *may* repent. If Jehovah spreads out his hands all the day long, to a rebellious people, and calls them to look unto him, and be saved; they *may* be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. To intreat men to apply for favours which were never intended, is not consistent with sincerity and benevolence in man; much less
can

can we apply such conduct to the God of truth and love, whose words are all very pure. On this ground we may be assured of the universal love of God. In the holy scriptures we have great variety of unlimited warnings, instructions, exhortations, intreaties, and invitations; and the most gracious promises connected with them. And if we believe that the words of God are without dissimulation, we must believe that he is loving to every man.

IV. The general influence of the Spirit of God, is another evidence of universal provision for the salvation of mankind. This is called by some divines, common grace. By others, the light of natural conscience. Various attempts have been made to explain it away, and to represent it as a thing which has no relation to the present or eternal salvation of the soul. But if there be any influence in man, which has a tendency to convince him of sin, or to incline him to seek after God, it must be DIVINE; *for in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.* By nature, the heart of man is *evil*, ONLY evil, and that continually. And every good gift is from above, and cometh from the father of lights. By the first Adam, sin entered into the world; and the nature we derive from him

him is wholly sinful. If therefore any good is found in us, it must be through the second Adam, who is *a quickening spirit*, by whom *the free gift came on all men to justification of life*; and who is *the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*.

Let us then enquire, whether the sacred writings give us any account of a portion of the Spirit of God being given to men in general.

Men before the flood had the ministry of Noah, and *God strove with them by his Spirit*, Gen. vi. 3. Among the various blessings which God bestowed upon the Israelites in the wilderness, this is particularly mentioned, *that he gave them his good Spirit to instruct them*, Neh. ix. 20. What use they made of this precious gift, we learn from Isa. lxiii. 10. *But they rebelled, and vexed his holy spirit: Therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them*. He declared, *That he was grieved with that generation forty years; and he swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest*. And the martyr Stephen charged the same crime on their posterity: *Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: As your fathers did, so do ye*. Acts vii. 51.

St.

St. Paul describes the state of the heathen world also, respecting divine influences. He represents them as being without the Jewish, or Christian law, and that nevertheless they do the things which the law of divine revelation requires:—that they shew the work of that law written in their hearts; their conscience reproving them for evil, and approving of what was right, *Rom. ii. 14, 15*. What can all this mean, but the holy influence of God, in the hearts of heathens, convincing them of sin, and inclining them to holiness—a ray of that *light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*. This view well agrees with that general promise, *I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh*, *Joel. ii. 28*. *Acts ii. 17*.

Does not this account correspond with common experience? Is there a man, who never felt any holy influence from God? No, in every man, God has a witness. And, however this witness may now be slighted, the day will come, when this neglected witness will testify to all the finally disobedient, that *Jehovah called, but they refused: that they set at nought all his counsel, and would not receive his reproof*.

Reader, examine thyself. How often hast thou hid this precious talent in the earth,

earth, and resisted the Spirit of God. Awake, thou that sleepest. To-day, while it is called to-day, hear his voice, and harden not thy heart, that thou mayest know the time of thy visitation.

V. The failure of the means appointed for the salvation of men, and their final destruction, are displeasing to God.

In the writings of Moses and the prophets, we see various means appointed for the salvation of the ancient Jews; those means often ineffectual;—and on this account, Jehovah greatly displeased with them. He abounded towards them in the richest manifestations of his wisdom and mercy. But they often disobeyed his voice, and provoked his awful indignation. This fact is fully illustrated in *Deut.* xxxii. chapter throughout. In another place the divine conduct in seeking their happiness, their ungrateful returns, and the consequent displeasure of God, are expressed with great clearness: *He sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending, because he had compassion on his people. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

Jesus

Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem, because in the time of their gracious visitation, they had neglected to know the things belonging to their peace, until they were hid from their eyes. And most likely alluding to the ancient prophecy, that the gathering of the people should be to the Messiah, he declared, that he would often have gathered them, but they would not. Respecting the final destruction of men, the solemn oath of Jehovah ought to remove every scruple. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live.*

If the various causes of eternal misery are examined, they will be found to be highly displeasing to the holy and merciful God; and will prove that he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. What are the reasons assigned in the sacred writings, why some men are not saved? Is it because no provision was made for their salvation? No intimation is any where given of this. It is, however, most certain, that if no provision was made, that must be the sole cause of their not being saved. The scripture points out such causes as the following—*God calls, but they refuse—They hate knowledge, and do not choose*

choose the fear of the Lord—They set at nought all his counsel, and despise his reproof Prov. i. 24, &c.—They will not come to Christ, John v. 40.—They do not believe on the Son of God—They love darkness, and will not come to the light, John iii. 18, &c.—They receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved—They take pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thess. ii. 10, &c. On this subject, therefore, the word of God is clear and decisive. The things which are necessary to salvation, are required of all men, according to the different dispensations they are favoured with. And if they perish, God imputes it wholly to themselves. The language of God to every child of perdition is, *If thou doest not well, sin lieth at thy door.*

From the whole, we may safely conclude, that every thing belonging to the destruction of men, is displeasing to God; that he is offended with them, because they continue in sin; because they remain in ignorance, in condemnation, in misery; because they are not saved. This clearly demonstrates, that the will of God was their salvation.

